TheVillage

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Issue #249 November 2024

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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TheVillage Issue 249 November 2024

inside

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Front cover: One of the early scarecrows on the streets of Alvechurch for the village's scarecrow festival. More pictures next time . . .

Festive Film & Afternoon Tea

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CAR PARKING CRAZY!

IT'S BEEN AN autumn of car parking comedy and chaos in Alvechurch, where work to improve two of the main car parks has reduced the number of spaces available – just as villagers face the possibility of losing access to the largest long-stay parking in the village centre.

Meanwhile, in Lickey, the start of the new school year has brought rising concern over dangerous and selfish parking during drop-off and pick-up times.

But in Barnt Green there will be at least one more parking space after the owner of a vehicle left on the Fiery Hill Road commuter car park – for as long as five years, the parish council believes – was traced by police and asked to move it.

The resurfacing work on Tanyard Lane car park, Alvechurch, by contractors for Bromsgrove District Council raised a laugh when, predictably, social media alerts failed to reach one motorist who had parked her car there.

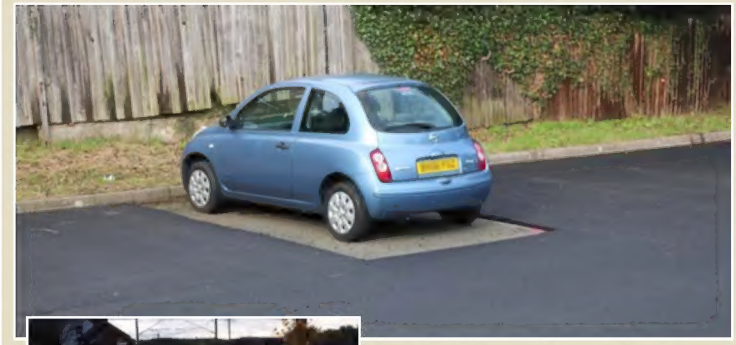
A photo of the Nissan Micra sitting in a neat cut-out of the new tarmac soon went viral around the village.

But the real problems for villagers emerged when new parking spaces were painted on to the fresh surface: there are now around eight fewer spaces than before.

The new layout leaves a large empty space which, as parish councillor Keith Wiseman pointed out at the October parish council meeting, was large enough to install a maypole.

District councillors have asked for an investigation by officers into the "fiasco" and for a better layout to be installed.

The long-running problems over the "great lake of Alvechurch" at the station car park, meanwhile, was tackled by contractors for West Midlands Trains. Unfortunately, it seems the new material brought in to fill the hollow has either just made it shallower, but much wider, or prevented the water from draining into a soakaway.



Clockwise from above: When Facebook doesn't work; 'Long-term' parking on Barnt Green's commuter park; The Lickey parking panel looks for solutions; The 'great lake' gets bigger at Alvechurch station.

Whatever has happened, the lake there is now bigger than ever after heavy rain, forcing commuters to get wet feet or park out on nearby streets.

Again, the problem has been reported by district councillors who have asked for more work to be done to rectify the problem.

These problems will pale beside the potential loss of more than 40 long-term spaces in the centre of the village this month.

A long-standing arrangement between Bromsgrove District Council and the former Sports & Social Club, now called the Alvechurch Inn, allowing residents to use the car park comes to an end in November. It has previously been suggested this will be replaced by 30-minute monitored parking.

The newly formed Alvechurch Business Partnership is meeting district council leadership later this month to emphasise how large this problem could become for village businesses. One suggestion to create more parking saces is to remove double-yellow parking restrictions along the 20mph zone through the village centre, but this would need county highways support.

Lickey's parking problems were higlighted at an open meeting called by county councillor Adrian Kriss and held at the Trinity Centre, where more than 30 residents aired their concerns.

The safety of Lickey Hills Primary School pupils topped the list, with some said to be forced to walk in the road by cars double-parked across the pavement.

The panel, including police, school leaders and district councillor Anita Dale, heard from residents who had received abuse from drivers parked across their driveways. Some motorists had even driven across front gardens. The panel will report back early in the new year.

Speeders caught one a minute

A DRIVER a minute was caught speeding when new technology was trialled in the heart of a village.

Alvechurch parish councillor Brett Shepherd, who is spearheading the council's efforts to tackle speeding, provided an update on a new speed enforcement campaign in Alvechurch village centre.

TruCAM, a handheld tool used to identify and capture road traffic offences, recorded 15 vehicles breaking the 20mph limit in just 15 minutes during a recent Thursday trial. Days later, 24 more drivers were identified speeding in a 30-minute period on a Saturday.

Parish council chairman Marc Worrall noted that the offenders were likely to have been "not outsiders, but local people".

The TruCAM device captures video evidence of speeding drivers, without the need for a parked police van, making it ideal for use in tight spaces or areas deemed unsafe for community speed watch campaigns.

Following the success of the Alvechurch trial, councillors have agreed to include a TruCAM in Bordesley in their quarterly policing priorities.

Bordesley is currently campaigning to reduce its speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, and the introduction of this new technology could play a key role in supporting those efforts.

Mystery painter

BARNT GREEN PARISH council is investigating how the wooden posts holding the roped fence at the "pollinator site" on Hewell Road came to be painted grey. The council had wanted to keep them "natural" so they would be low maintenance.

Staying wild?

ALVECHURCH'S REWILDING initiative, which allows certain grass verges in the village to remain unmown, has received mixed opinions from councillors. With no official report on its benefits yet from Bromsgrove District Council, some said while the rewilding areas may be healthy, there were aesthetic concerns, including over the area outside the council offices on George Road.

Coun Steve Hornsby defended the project: "It's clear from the Wildlife Trust that verges are a major contributor to improving biodiversity and reducing carbon footprint. The trial worked well, but it's too early to see the environmental impact. But if you keep cutting, wildlife definitely won't move in."

Clash avoided

NEXT YEAR'S Social Eats event in Barnt Green will now be held on August 30 after parish councillors agreed they did not want it to clash with Blackwell Music Festival, planned for September 6.

CROWN MEADOW First School and Nursery was buzzing with excitement as Olympic sprinter and bobsledder Joel Fearon (*pictured above with pupils*) visited for a day packed with sporting activities.

As part of the *Great Athletes initiative,* Joel spent the day inspiring children with his story of determination and hard work, while leading them through fun and engaging athletic events.

His key message to all children was "be brave" and every child was determined to take this advice throughout the morning, and beyond. The event was a huge success, raising more than £2,500 to support the school's PE program.

Headteacher Mrs Hague expressed her gratitude, saying: "I think it is essential we motivate our young community to be physically and mentally fit. This event inspired all children to be brave and tackle challenges with perseverance and resilience, which truly exemplifies our school values."

Reverend Joey

A CELEBRATION party (above) was held to mark the ordination of Joey Redhead – now Reverend Redhead – as he became a new Minister at Alvechurch Baptist Church after three years of training.

Streets of scarecrows

BLACKWELL First School's PTA organised a successful Scarecrow Trail in October, offering the community a chance to explore Blackwell and discover creatively designed scarecrows while supporting a good cause, *writes Keith Woolford.*

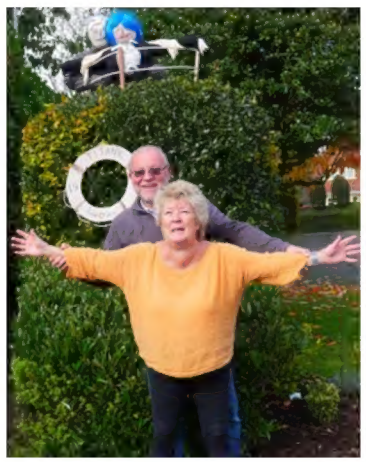
Blessed with decent weather for a day of wandering, visitors collected maps, and enjoyed hot dogs and treats from the school playground before setting off on the trail.

This year's theme was "movies". The "Beetlejuice" skeleton bagged the top spot in the popular vote, followed by "Cruella" in second place and "Barbie" in third.

The Scarecrow Trail drew a great turnout, with families and residents coming together for a day of fun and creativity, raising £950, which will be used to provide additional resources and subsidise school trips for pupils, further enhancing their learning.

101 visitors: Cruella Deville and her dalmations were popular.

Above: A fantastic Mr Fox.
Below: Barbie and friends.



"Jack, I'm flying": Dramatic scenes on the *Titanic* in Blackwell.

Beetlejuice: The iconic creepster won the popular award.

AS *The Village* went to press in October, Alvechurch was preparing to host its own week of autumnal fun. The popular Scarecrow Trail was returning for everyone to enjoy over half term.

The streets were already buzzing with excited families, keen to explore the creations on the opening morning.

We'll be reporting on the event next month, including how much was raised for The Lounge, so look out for our December/January issue for more pictures like the one on the right . . .

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IT'S PANTO SEASON

REHEARSALS are in full swing for one village drama group this November, who are preparing for their next production to delight villagers.

It's panto time for Alvechurch Dramatic Society (oh yes it is!), as writers Chris Davies and Paul Chamberlain return to the world of the Arabian Nights for *Sinbad the Sailor and the Curse of Zard*.

This show is a sequel to the group's 2010 smash hit *Sherry Zard and the Sultan's Curse*.

This time around, Sherry Zard and her husband the Sultan have fallen on hard times, and their nasty brother Jaffa is poised to take over the Kingdom.

Enter adventurous stranger Sinbad with tales of jewels and riches. This catches the attention of the greedy Jaffa, who sends him on a series of increasingly difficult quests, with control of the Kingdom as the prize!

Will Sinbad save the day, or will the feisty Princess Raisin come to the rescue? Will there really be a flying carpet in Alvechurch Village Hall? Will the famous panto camel make an appearance?

Curtains up: The cast prepare for the upcoming production.

Alvechurch Dramatic Society invite you to come and join them to find out the answers to these questions, and more! Children attending the matinee are encouraged to come dressed as their favourite fictional character.

The production runs from Thursday 28th November until Saturday 30th November at 7:30pm (plus a 2.30pm Saturday matinee) at Alvechurch Village Hall.

Tickets £9; £8 concessions, which are available from The Lounge, Alvechurch; or by phoning/texting 07977 140088; or you can email: ads.alvechurch@gmail.com

FOUNDED in 1964, Lickey WI have been celebrating their 60th "birthday" celebrations. The group were featured on BBC Midlands Today, who were marking 60th anniversaries and birthdays around the West Midlands. BBC reporter Ben Sidwell brought the iconic red sofa to the Trinity centre in Lickey, where he shared tea and cake with members of the group.

Jenny Ryder, President of Lickey WI, said: "We were delighted to be visited by Ben. everyone was amazed at how long it took to film what turned out to be less than a minute on screen but all enjoyed the opportunity to take part. We had our annual birthday meeting in July, where we invited representatives from other WIs in the Bromsgrove & Hillside Group to join us to celebrate."

Prize pickers

Volunteers congregated in Alvechurch village square to tackle the challenge of litter picking.

Families and couples were tasked with picking up litter from roadsides and parks around the village, in areas which are harder for the parish council to clear.

Organisers said that many certificates of achievements were given to the young volunteers, and much of the litter came from hedgerows along the main roads and parks including The Meadows and the Muga on Crown Meadow.

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Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council News

Newsletter November 2024

All photographs courtesy of Cllr Bakul Kumar

Get in the festive spirit: The Lickey Christmas lights switch-on celebrations, in December 2023.

Christmas Events

Christmas is fast approaching and our plans for our events are under way.
In Lickey, we will have our annual Christmas tree lights switch-on and concert. We will be joined by the wonderful choir from Lickey First School, Blackwell Concert Band and Santa himself! This will take place at Trinity Church, Lickey at 4pm on Sunday 8th December.
In Blackwell we will switch on the Christmas tree lights with the help of Santa and give out prizes to our Christmas competition winners (see below for details). This will be at The Wheel, St Catherine's Church at 5pm on Friday 6th December. We welcome any residents who wish to attend.
We will not have photos in time for the December edition of *The Village*, so here (above, right) is one from last year to get you in the mood.

Christmas Competition

Every year we run a competition for the children of the Parish to produce artwork which is then reproduced for our Parish Council Christmas card. This year the theme is "Christmas jumpers"!

You can find a template and further instructions on our website.
Using crayons, paints, pencils, glitter, buttons, beads or digitally, create your own unique, fun and festive design! There will be small prizes for the different age category winners and the overall winning design will receive copies of the Christmas card they have designed.

Please submit your designs to Lickey School, Blackwell School or our Parish Council Office at the Trinity Centre, 411 Old Birmingham Rd, Lickey, Birmingham B45 8ES by the deadline of 19th November.

Councillor Vacancy

Your parish council needs YOU!
We have two vacancies for councillors. We would like to co-opt community-minded residents to help us.
If you are passionate about Lickey and Blackwell and want to be the difference – become a parish councillor.
To find out more about being a parish councillor for Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council please visit our website or contact our Executive Officer.

Play Area Refurbishment

We are delighted that the Play Area Refurbishment in Blackwell is now complete (pictured), partly funded by a grant from the Government via Bromsgrove District Council. Maisie's Gardens have installed a wildflower

border, and children from Blackwell School have planted 172 bulbs around the play area to celebrate the completion of the project that the children collaborated with. We hope that the refurbishment will make the equipment more accessible and will provide years of enjoyment to the children of the parish.

Benches

Look out for our handyman installing a replacement memorial bench for David King at the pocket park in Blackwell. We also hope to replace a bench on Old Birmingham Road in Lickey, and we are having the other benches painted.

Change of email and website addresses

Parish and town councils are changing addresses to ".gov.uk" addresses. We have changed ours to: www.lickeyandblackwell-pc.gov.uk and you can contact our Executive Officer via email: eo@lickeyandblackwell-pc.gov.uk.

We are focused on the happiness of each and every one of our residents and we love being able to help make the most of the wonderful facilities on offer at Burcot, which include a full and varied timetable of activities for all to enjoy.

Our belief is for every one of our residents to 'Live well today and thrive tomorrow' and at Burcot Grange & Lodge there is a plethora of opportunity to enable everyone to do so.

MEET & GREET MONDAYS *for those living with dementia*
Every last Monday of the month, come and join us for an afternoon of singing, dancing and refreshments between 2:00 and 5:00pm

DROP-IN *Clinic*
On the 4th Thursday of the month, join us for financial advice or support with Will's, Power of Attorney, Trusts and more.
Our advisors will be available between 10:00am and 1:00pm and we'll be serving light refreshments throughout

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Parish news

Alvechurch Parish at Christmas

Parish-wide Christmas decoration competition

Don't forget our annual Christmas decoration competition in which you can win a trophy! Please let us know the address of the premises you're nominating, and attach a picture if possible. You can nominate your own display if you wish, or others you spot while around and about. This competition includes the whole Parish – Alvechurch village, Bordesley, Hopwood, Rowney Green and Weatheroak.

Send an email with your nomination to assistantclerk@alvechurch.gov.uk between 25 November and 9 December 2024. Winners will be announced shortly afterwards through our Facebook page.

Best external house and/or front garden display

Best decorated front door or window

Best decorated front door or window – Commercial Premises

For a full list of judging criteria, visit alvechurch.gov.uk

Alvechurch Village Christmas lights switch on

Saturday 30 November from 4pm

Keep an eye on social media for more information.

Alvechurch Parish Council seek to actively reduce the parish's carbon footprint

Currently Alvechurch's footprint has been calculated as being 15.5t per household consumption. If you would like to find out your own personal carbon footprint please go to **https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/**

Through collective small actions we can all achieve significant change, paving the way for a sustainable future that begins right on our doorsteps.

Here are a few examples of ways in which you can reduce your carbon footprint:

- **Switch to greener energy provider/reduce your heating thermostat by 1%**
- **Lower your laundry's impact (turn down the washing machine temperature/hang the washing outside on the line to dry)**
- **Try to eat less red meat and dairy products; eat 'seasonally' whenever possible**
- **Utilise modes of public transport; share a lift; walk or ride a bike**
- **Recycle household waste (plastics, carboard, tin etc)/upcycle)**

Unsung Hero award presented to Mrs Eileen McHugh

Mrs Eileen McHugh has acted for a number of years as the Council's allotment liaison person and to whom the Council were most indebted.

Councillor Surgery dates

The next Councillor Surgery will be held in December at the Coach and Horses, Weatheroak. Please keep an eye on our social media and website for dates.

Useful contacts

Alvechurch Village

Peter Freeman
Sue Lambert
Tony Williams
Keith Wiseman
Marc Worrall
Brett Shepherd
Nigel Cuttress

Hopwood

Paul Edwards
Samantha Lewis

Rowney Green and Bordesley

Stephen Hornsby
Barry Thornton

Alvechurch Parish Council

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Have your say

We're keen to receive your comments or queries; do please contact the Parish Office if you wish to discuss any matter.

APC office

Jayne Smailes
Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer
clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Fay Murphy
Assistant Clerk
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THROW LIGHT ON PLAN

Dear Editor – I think your readers are entitled to more than 12 lines about the "Panels Plan", which was squeezed into the *Village News Round-Up* in the October edition; slightly less than the "Santa Secured" article for Barnt Green's Christmas Lights switch-on.

As you reported, the so-called Oak Valley Energy Park project would cover with solar panels most of the agricultural land either side of Icknield Street, all the way from Weatheroak Hill to the M42.

Existing national policy calls for developers to prioritise brownfield land for green energy and housing projects, and only use Green Belt land if there are very special circumstance.

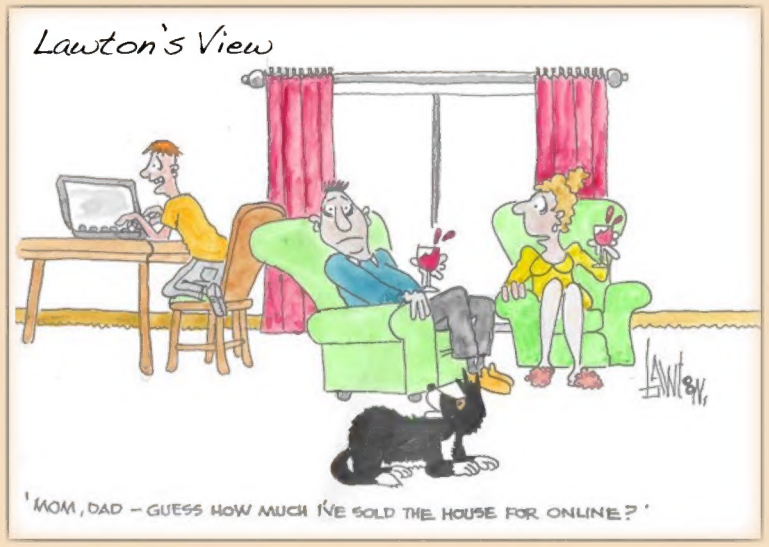
The guidance also states that flat land of limited agricultural value should be used, and that solar arrays and their attendant battery storage and converters should not be close to residential communities.

The Oak Valley Energy Park would not only be highly visible from Weatheroak Hill, designated by the National Trust in their proposed "8 Hills Regional Park", but would also deprive walkers, cyclists, horseriders and fishermen of one of their most popular rural venues.

If it were to be given planning permission, it would also create a precedent for similar projects for speculators to come forward with schemes to convert neighbouring Green Belt land around Rowney Green and Alvechurch from agricultural to industrial use.

Hardly a matter to be tucked away in the bottom corner of a *Village News Round-Up*.

Bob Dale, Weatheroak



STAR LETTER

Bob Dale is the recipient of The Village *"Star Letter" award of £25.*

We'll be choosing a Star Letter every issue, so send in your views (email address below) for a chance to win £25.

We'd like to thank October's Star Letter winner who donated their prize money to The Lounge.

Housing for whose benefit?

Dear Editor – There appears to be another potential new housing development on the horizon, with the forthcoming disposal of the Cropwood trust estate, Blackwell (many people would refer to this estate as "Hunters Hill School", but it's a lot more than that).

The whole estate equates to 35 hectares (approx. 87 acres) which shows extensive lands to the left and right of Spirehouse Lane and the field where the more recent Blackwell Festivals have been held.

This land was given to the Birmingham City Council (BCC) by the Cadbury family for the benefit of Birmingham children and their education and has been run by a charity trust. A report outlining the disposal proposal was supposed to have been issued by BCC in June 2024 and then in September 2024, this is now going to be issued by BCC in November 2024 as reported at the Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council meeting in September 2024 by the head of operations at BCC.

While the new Labour government wants to see developments of 9,000 new houses by 2040 in and around Bromsgrove and surrounding districts, it would appear yet again the consultation and engagement process has failed.

Local people should be involved from the outset and have a proactive engagement rather than the standard reactive role in the future developments within our areas.

With the current budget value for building land in the Bromsgrove area being £2.85m per hectare, even a 50% usage of the land could generate a substantial sum of money.

Do the maths and let's see who would benefit.

Michael Batchelor, Blackwell

Have your say … about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication.
We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is November 15th 2024.

WHERE'S VINNY?

HARRY James, aged nine and his sister Beatrice, aged 12, from Barnt Green and pupils at Alvechurch Middle School, show off the Mini Vinny they won for finding the little creature in October's hunt the hedgehog competition.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on the bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on 15 November 2024. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

The place to live?

Dear Editor – Plymouth Road not Barnt Green (as stated in the October issue of *The Village*)? That is simply incorrect!

First, I have no problem with the idea of living in Lickey – it's lovely!

I live off Twatling Road – even further from Barnt Green village centre than Plymouth Road. However, my postal address is Barnt Green and on Google maps my address and Plymouth Road are clearly well within the boundaries of Barnt Green.

Could Councillor Cholmondeley be thinking of parish council boundaries in suggesting that Plymouth Road is not in Barnt Green?

Joy Bourne, Barnt Green

Lamenting the Lickeys

Dear Editor – In my employment I am fortunate to frequent many areas that compete with the Lickey Hills for visitors, and the comparison between these areas and the Lickey Hills puts the Lickeys to shame.

Above: The Lickey Visitor Centre.

People can refer to the current Birmingham City Council financial difficulties, a downsized work force, the lack of this and the lack of that, but the Lickey Hills, as a recreational facility, has been in decline for years.

The decline appeared to gather pace a few years ago with a large tree felling programme, apparently undertaken to bring the area back to how it should have been pre-war, but these areas have just been taken over by bramble, hence . . . what was the point?

The children's play area is a major disappointment for many children. Play equipment cordoned off, play

continues overleaf

continues from previous page

equipment has been removed and never replaced, any equipment left needs a good lick of paint and the fencing is falling down. The benches in and the around the visitor centre have seen better days. Path steps have failed. Trees have been felled with no attempt to manage the works. Signs are damaged and never repaired. The ponds are silted and blocked with reeds, and the ducks appear to have accepted their fate. The Visitor Centre, now without a café, is now just a place for the council staff to presumably keep warm and discuss what needs to be done.

The golf course doesn't seem to struggle to get works done, so, what's the difference between the Lickey Hills and the golf course?

Credit must be given to those volunteers who, against the odds, try to look after the Lickey Hills, but their enthusiasm can only go so far.

An area that was once waiting for memories to be made, is now becoming a place of people wondering if they should have gone elsewhere.

Lickey Resident

Be careful what you wish for

Dear Editor – Your lead news story from the October edition referencing the "ghetto estate" is a direct result of the lack of planning foresight of so many, and particularly the objectional, nonsensical, default planning stance taken by the likes of Alvechurch Parish Council on virtually every occasion.

The residents of Hopwood are now resigned to a totally disproportionate number of "affordable" or "social housing" properties in the area once these 34 houses have been built.

Previous applications on this site for a private housing development have been fought and dismissed.

My personal view was always one of allowance being better than what we had in situ, a container site. How many will now wish they had pushed for the approval of one of the previous schemes? It appears the political winds will be driving the acceptance of many more, once refuted, parcels of land for "affordable housing".

Therefore, before we all object vigorously to any new proposed scheme, let this estate be a lesson in what you may just get in its place!

Disappointed, Hopwood

'Much needed homes approved'

Dear Editor – *"Much needed affordable homes (eventually) approved."*

That's the alternative headline to the "ghetto estate" article on page 5 of October's edition of *The Village*.

Bromsgrove has a chronic under supply of affordable homes and homes in general. In fact the Planning Inspector noted the housing delivery as "woeful".

The Hopwood site is brownfield land, contributing little or nothing to the Green Belt, and is ideally located for new housing. The unfortunate NIMBY position of Bromsgrove district councillors went against the recommendations of their experienced and appointed planning officers.

As a consequence, when the Inspector approved the homes the Inspector also awarded costs against Bromsgrove District Council for "wholly unreasonable behaviour" in wasting the applicant's time and money. A key matter the "ghetto" article helpfully omitted.

Those costs are ultimately met through local taxpayers' money. Something councillors should be mindful of, particularly when presented with future recommendations by their appointed planning officers for more housing in the right locations.

It is high time members of the planning committee worked with their officers and not against them.

Andy Carter, Cofton Hackett

How can we make this safe to walk?

Dear Editor – In response to the "Star Letter" in the October edition of *The Village*, I agree with the writer's comments on the engineer's response to walking along Sandhills Green beneath the railway bridge.

When I subsequently asked the engineer for further clarification of his comments that it was unsafe, he reiterated that: "this was in the context of any pedestrian walking in a highway with no footway access [is] unsafe. Anyone would agree I'm sure but the onus is on the pedestrian to take the risk and has to bear the responsibility should they choose to walk in the highway."

Places we live and work in change over time, and we must be aware and flexible to ensure that our infrastructure is moulded to respond to the needs of changing places and

continues on page 20

Unsafe passage: How can this route be made suitable for pedestrians?

continues from page 18

needs of communities that use them, wherever possible.

Over the years traffic from new developments around Barnt Green has increased. Also there is now a residential home, with carers walking to and from Barnt Green station, parents with pushchairs and young children, or the elderly with electric scooters, who may also need to utilise the highway under the bridge.

Where we can deliver new pavements we do, as can be evidenced between Linthurst Newtown and Barnt Green. But I have been told that in this case there can be no footway in this location due to the narrowness of the bridge.

I have suggested narrowing the carriageway with a priority for vehicles travelling in one direction, so that space can be made for pedestrians and increased lighting, but none of these have been deemed possible by technical advisors.

As I represent the residents who have expressed concern about no safe footway access under the bridge, I have escalated this matter to both the cabinet member responsible and the head of highways and transport for Worcestershire, and I have been told, as of September 17th, that it is being re-visited.

Once I have a further response I will report back to Barnt Green Parish Council, but in the meantime I am always open to any suggestions that have not already been considered or implemented. I am happy to discuss the matter more fully – please see my contact details below.

In addition, for the benefit of readers, where the Local Authority has a Traffic Regulatory Order (TRO) in place for a "Road Closure," then disregarding them can mean anything from a fixed penalty through to prosecution for careless driving.

Adrian Kriss
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ALVECHURCH PARISH REMEMBERS

St Laurence Church and Alvechurch Parish Council are coming together again for Remembrance Sunday. Representatives from our community have been invited to take part as Alvechurch Parish Remembers together.

Please note that Bear Hill will be closed to traffic up to Snake Lane between 10.30am - 12pm

On 11th November there will be no formal Act of Remembrance at Memorial Green, although you may wish to gather for a time of quiet reflection.

Sunday 10th November

St Laurence Church at 10.15am and at the Memorial Green from 10.50am.

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SEASONS GREETINGS

Our Christmas message baubles will be back next month (like the one on the right). If you'd like to feature a message from you or your business, contact **editor@villageonline.co.uk** for prices and booking.

YOUR CHRISTMAS MESSAGE HERE

Christmas is coming

Alvechurch Christmas lights switch on will be held on Saturday 30 November in The Square. Choirs will be performing and Father Christmas will also be there to watch the lights come on.

Barnt Green will also be hosting its Christmas Lights switch-on event on Saturday 30 November on Hewell Road, check their social media and website for further information.

Blackwell and Lickey Parish Council's Christmas Tree lights switch-on and annual Christmas concert will be held on Sunday 8 December at 4pm at Trinity Church, Lickey.

Head along to Blackwell Tree lighting with Santa at St Catherine's Church on Friday 6 December at 5pm, followed by mince pies and mulled wine at Blackwell Community Hall.

Alvechurch Village Hall is holding a Christmas Craft Fayre on November 10, 10am-4pm, pick up beautiful Christmas gifts. Entry is £1 and funds will go towards the Village Hall

Alvechurch Dramatic Society present their upcoming production *Sinbad the Sailor and the Curse of Zard*. Running from 28-30 November, see page 10 for details.

St Laurence Church's Advent Star switch-on will take place on 1 December at 5pm with carols and hymns, including Alvechurch Middle School Choir.

St Laurence's "Shiny Bright Sparkling Light" Nativity Play will take place at the church on 24 December at 4pm

Crown Meadow First School Christmas Fayre will be held at the school on 9 December.

A Christmas Fair will be held on 7 December at 11am in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey. £1 admission to raise funds for the Christmas Shelter and church.

The Midland Sinfonia will hold a Christmas concert "A Winter Journey" at 7.30pm on 7th December in the Ark at St Laurence Church Alvechurch. See page 50 for details.

Barnt Green Choral Society hold their Family Christmas Concert on 14 December. See page 45 for details.

Alvechurch Crafty Ladies will be holding a Christmas Sale of hand-crafted gifts on Monday 4 November in Alvechurch Library between 9.30am – 1.30pm (cash only).

St Laurence Church, Alvechurch is holding a volunteer meeting on 18 November at 7pm for anyone interested in helping plan this year's Christmas Day Community Lunch.

Christmas Day
COMMUNITY LUNCH, 1PM
The Ark, Alvechurch

Do you fancy some company on Christmas Day?

Whether you live alone, you are a couple or a larger family unit you are invited to join us at The Ark for a Christmas Day Community Lunch.

MENU
A tradition Christmas lunch with Turkey or Nut Roast and all the trimmings.
Dessert will be a selection of Christmas treats including cheese and biscuits.
Wine, soft drinks and tea and coffee.

TRANSPORT
Would you like to come but need help in getting to The Ark? We can help with this too! Call and speak to us.

BOOKING
If you know that you are definitely coming, please book in advance.
If on Christmas Day you would like to come but haven't booked please do come along anyway, there is always plenty to go round.

COST
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Cast-offs to Catwalk

AN evening of fashion arrived in Barnt Green in October when Acorns Children's Hospice hosted a fashion show, in conjunction with Barnt Green Women's Institute.

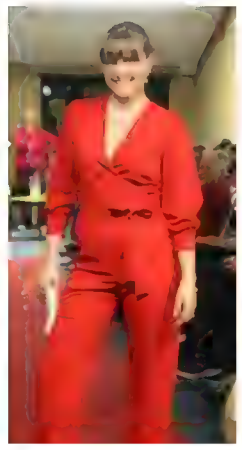
Barnt Green Baptist Church accommodated a full audience, keen to see what Acorns had on offer. The catwalk was split into two halves, day wear and exquisite evening wear, with an interval where attendees were able to buy cakes and refreshments – and have the opportunity to snag a bargain. Some audience members were seen asking the models quite literally to buy the clothes off their backs.

£3,600 was raised at the event through ticket sales, raffle tickets, refreshments and sales of the fantastic clothes on offer.

A spokesperson for Acorns said: "The evening was a great success. We'd like to offer many thanks to our volunteers, the models, Barnt Green WI, our raffle prizes donors and Jess and Stuart from the Baptist church.

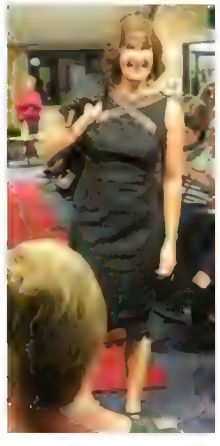
"We'd also like to say 'thank you' for the ongoing support of all our customers and donors providing vital income for Acorns Children's Hospices."

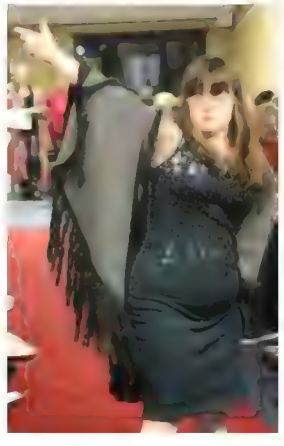
Fashion show organisers and models (from left): Jackie, Jacqui, Dee, Karen, Leah, Mary, Linda and Anna.



Above & Below: The fantastic models present the 'evening wear'. Left: The raffle prizes of the evening waiting for distribution.

Delicious cakes served during the interval.





Work out like a star

VILLAGERS can now try out their celebrity idols' latest fitness craze with the opening of a new boutique studio, *writes Bob Jefford*.

The Bodi Barn at Tardebigge Court boasts six reformer Pilates machines, an apparatus that's shot to prominence with recent endorsements from the likes of David Beckham, Kim Kardashian and Justin Bieber.

Co-owner Natalie Bagnall said that TikTok and Instagram posts had created a new fitness fad: "It's become very popular over the last six to 12 months. There's loads of celebs and footballers using it".

Reformer Pilates machines are graduated spring-loaded resistance machines which enhance traditional mat-based Pilates exercises.

"It's a different type of workout and it's so varied, you could do a class every day of week and it'd always be different," Natalie said.

"It's a bit special because unlike mat Pilates, this is doing exercises with resistance, so it's enabling improvement in mobility, stability and core strength. It's also a low impact exercise, that's why it's good for all ages, and also for rehab."

Try something new: Natalie Bagnall (left) and Sarah Cartlidge at their newly opened studio.

Every class is led by a qualified instructor providing bespoke guidance.

Business partner Sarah Cartlidge decided to set up The Bodi Barn after she looked for a reformer Pilates class to join, but couldn't find anywhere local.

"People are really enjoying it," she said. "I think that's because there are small classes.

"Some people aren't very confident going to the gym, or they're a bit insecure, a bit scared, so coming to a small class makes them feel more confident."

You can find out more about the classes available at The Bodi Barn on pages 26–27.

Who knew what to expect?

EXPECTATIONS were certainly exceeded as The Midland Sinfonia's concert *Expect the Unexpected* began, *writes Keith Woolford*.

The classical orchestra, who perform in St Laurence Church, Alvechurch began with Pachelbel's popular *Canon* and its accompanying piece *Gigue in D*. A marvellous opener, which was followed by the six movement *Suite for Strings* – a light work by Janacek.

The Midland Sinfonia at their *Expect the Unexpected* concert.

The extraordinarily talented Samantha Atkinson was a particular highlight of the evening as she wowed the audience with her saxophone offering, playing Glazunov's *Saxophone Concerto in E flat*.

Written in 2011, *Jazz for Strings Ensemble* came next by the German composer Sigi Busch which had a trio of string violinist and the double bass player David Burndrett free styling.

A touch of Rossini completed an unexpected programme as his *String Sonata No.5 in E flat* concluded a spectacular start to the new season for 2024/25.

See the What's On section for the orchestra's upcoming Christmas concert.

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The Bodi Barn

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Get in touch with Michelle and the team for more information on the skin treatments on offer at Millhouse Clinics and how to book yours.

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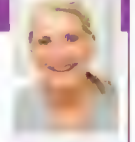

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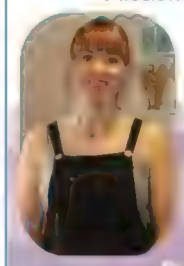

Beth is a Beauty and Holistic therapist as well as a Reiki Master. She is based at her beautiful studio in Finstall.

Call for an appointment

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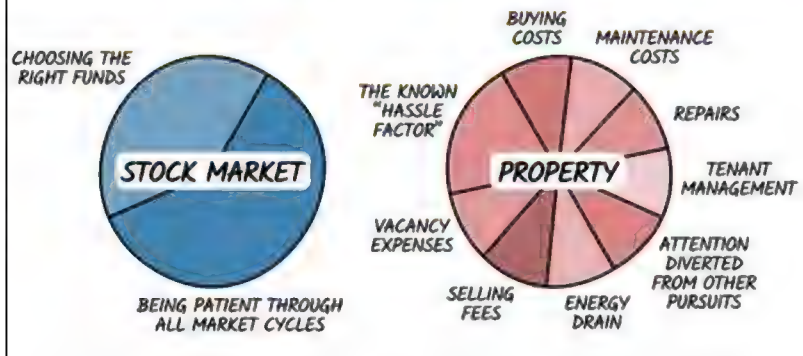
THE OVERLOOKED HASSLE OF BUYING PROPERTY

Martin Pryor explains how financial planning can save you from the hidden costs when buying property, and what's required to purchase property successfully.



WHEN building wealth for retirement, we often focus solely on the price tag of investments. However, many overlook a crucial insight that the true cost of owning assets extends far beyond the initial purchase price.

Sound financial planning involves accumulating assets that provide sustainable, growing retirement income.

While the monetary cost is obvious, it's just the tip of the iceberg. Hidden costs can significantly impact our well-being and financial success, yet they're frequently overlooked in investment decisions.

In this article, we'll explore these often neglected aspects of asset ownership. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of what it truly means to own different assets, equipping you to make informed decisions about investing your money, time, energy, and attention.

Many investors forget to consider ongoing financial costs like storage, maintenance, and insurance. They also overlook the time required to maintain assets, the attention diverted from other pursuits, and the emotional resilience some assets demand.

To illustrate, let's compare two asset classes that have long been popular with long-term investors: equities (ownership in great global companies) and residential property.

By examining the full spectrum of ownership costs for each, we can better guide our investment choices to secure a comfortable retirement.

THE COST OF EQUITY OWNERSHIP

Owning a diversified equity portfolio demands an informed upfront decision. However, in terms of ongoing costs, it demands very little. Counter-intuitively, the less you do, the more likely your chances of long-term success are.

At most, we'd recommend an annual valuation review and confirmation that the portfolio still suits your needs.

Day-to-day, the global companies you own a share of are managed by professional management and boards, and the fund you are invested in is reviewed by an experienced team of advisers, managers, and custodians. There is a monetary cost for this advice and management, but the right team can help you to minimise these and provide tremendous value on your road to financial independence.

The one intangible cost of this asset class is the emotional fortitude required to endure the frequent but temporary declines in the value of your portfolio.

However, the pain of these declines is likely to be forgotten in time while your long-term gains remain permanent.

THE COST OF PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The allure of tangible assets like residential properties often captures investors' imaginations. The ability to see and touch an asset, coupled with the promise of ownership, leads many to equate tangibility with value. However, the picture looks very different when we analyse the true cost of owning physical property.

In this case, we've seen the extensive upfront monetary costs and a seemingly never-ending list of ongoing financial costs associated with ownership. These ongoing costs are often forgotten in the initial analysis of a property's attractiveness and are frequently left out when calculating the return on the investment.

The ongoing costs include annual maintenance, finance costs, insurance, various taxes, vacancy periods, tenant damage, outsourced management, and many others.

More worrying, especially for retired investors, is the ongoing "hassle factor" that can take many, often unexpected, forms.

Property ownership is a high-hassle game. These intangible costs frequently surpass monetary considerations, impacting investors' well-being and decision-making processes.

If it ever becomes time to sell, another round of valuation and selling costs await you.

All these factors add layers of complexity that affect not only your financial standing but also your personal stress levels.

Another aspect to consider is that selling property is a one-and-done deal. You can't sell half a property, so the sale tax cannot be strategically planned.

MOVING FORWARD

Many if not most of our clients hold some property in addition to their main residence in their portfolio and we support this in the interests of diversification but without a doubt some clients' property holdings make more sense than others.

While property may be a suitable investment for some investors, understanding the full spectrum of costs associated with different asset types empowers investors to make decisions beyond surface-level attraction.

Financial planning involves allocating financial resources and optimising time, attention, and energy. By considering all aspects of asset ownership, investors can make informed choices that enhance their overall quality of life while securing long-term financial stability.

As you review your investment strategy, consider your financial goals and the time, energy, and attention each asset demands.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner

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This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.

DID YOU SPOT THEM?

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

NOVEMBER, the month of bonfires, planets and pantos. With clocks having gone back an hour (why do they do that?), the Sun sets just after 4pm and it's completely dark by 6.30pm so skywatching can start nice and early.

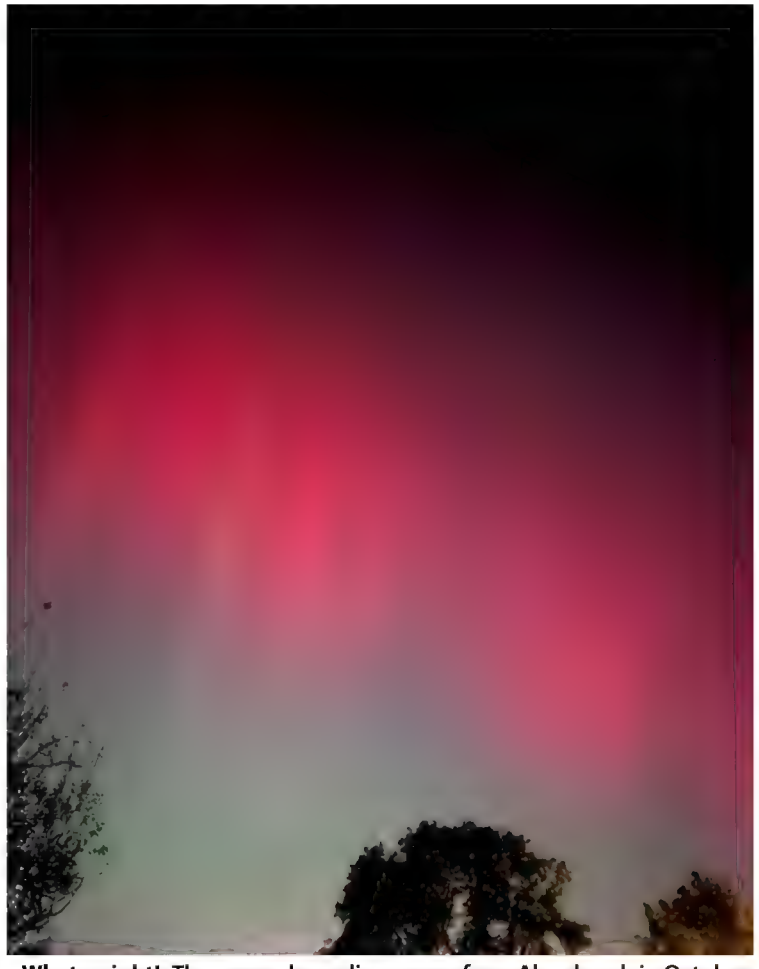
The first thing we can see if we look towards the glow of sunset is that brightest of planets, Venus. It is very low to the horizon at the start of the month but as the days go by, it begins to move away from the Sun and by the end of month, will be very bright indeed and easily mistaken for an oncoming aeroplane.

For the first few days, however, you need to be pretty quick as it disappears by 6pm. From this point on, as the skies darken, we begin to see the brighter stars, Vega high overhead, with its Summer triangle companions, Deneb to the left and Altair below. Over to the right of the sunset, we have Arcturus and low in the north, is Capella.

Over in the south east, is the next planet in our parade, Saturn, sitting below the great square of stars that is Pegasus.

Saturn is a most insubstantial world being a "Gas Giant" it is mostly composed of . . . well, gas. If you could sit Saturn in a giant bathtub, it would actually float. And anyway, the water would be very cold as it is so far away from the Sun.

As the evening progresses, Arcturus vanishes below the horizon but over in the east, another gas giant appears. The largest of all the planets, Jupiter, has enough mass to be more powerful than Saturn and its gravitational field is so strong that it flexes the surface of its nearest moons making Io, in particular very volcanic, giving its disk the appearance of a pizza, everyone's favourite treat.



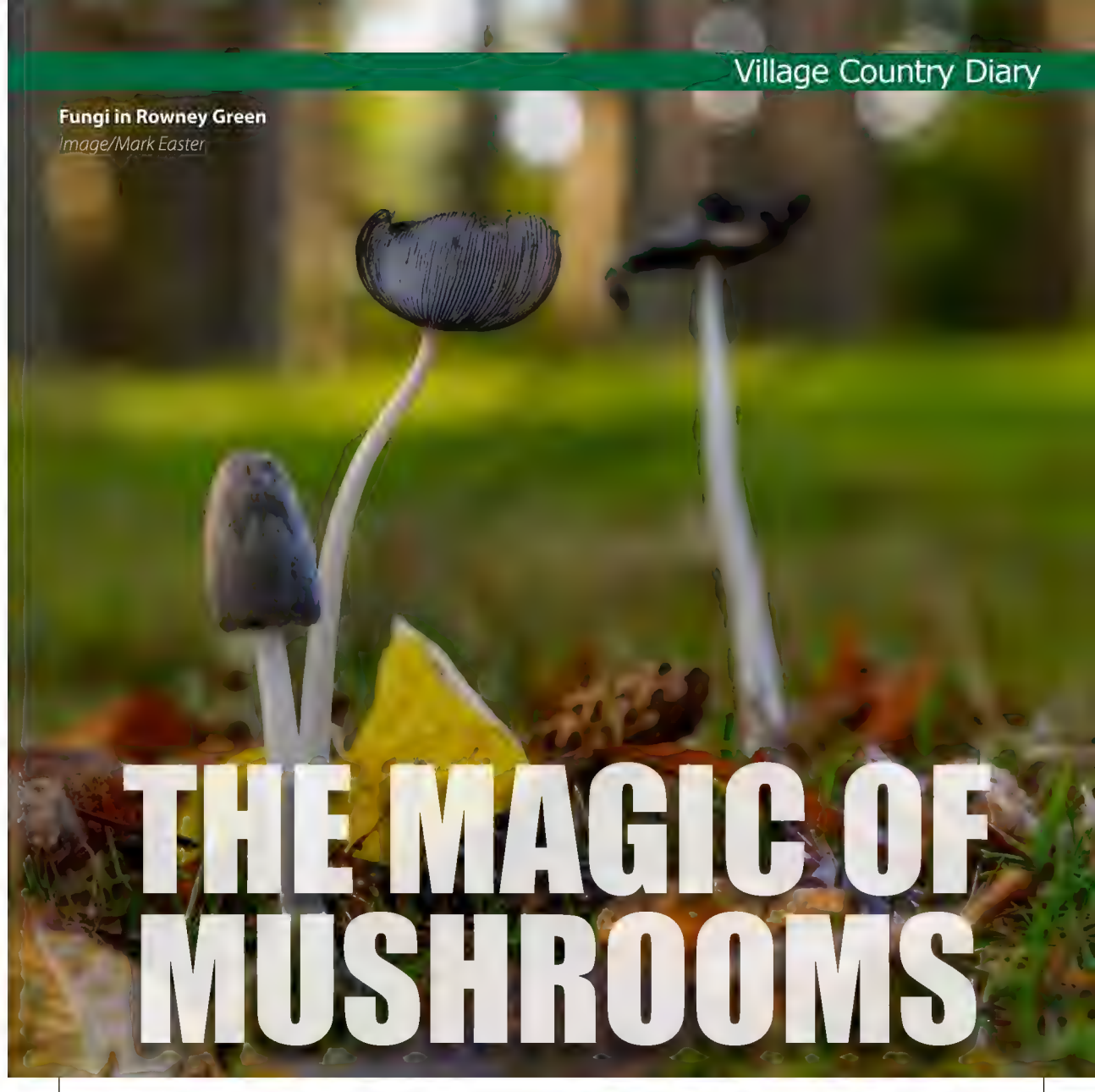
What a sight!: The aurora borealis, as seen from Alvechurch in October.
Image/Keith Johnston

The largest object in our solar system is, obviously, the Sun and it has been very busy recently. On Wednesday 9th October it released a great cloud of charged particles which hit the Earth the following day giving a spectacular display of Northern Lights.

This aurora was so big it could be seen in our villages, but it really showed up well using a camera, even the ones in a mobile phone. An early warning was given by Aurora Watch and many people managed to grab a picture.

Now the Sun goes through an 11 year cycle of sunspots and we are just nearing the end of the peak period, so its not quite over yet. It rotates roughly, in just under a month, or at least the middle of it does. Higher latitudes take longer so it we may yet see more solar storms this month.

At the end of the month, what we will definitely see is the traditional Christmas vignette that is the Amateur Dramatic Society's Panto. It runs from the 28th to the 30th so see you there (oh yes you will!).



Fungi in Rowney Green
Image/Mark Easter

THE MAGIC OF MUSHROOMS

I haven't been able to get out and about so much as usual due to illness, but watching the signs of autumn come has been as interesting as always.

After the strange year's weather when insects were very scarce, I hear there was a little late spurt of butterflies, dragonflies and other insects in the warmer September weather.

Late-flowering ivy is full of nectar and pollen for them, and many other plants continued to flower late in relatively mild weather.

I recently saw a red admiral butterfly outside my window, so they're about! Now the frost has started the leaves are just beginning to turn in mid-October.

Not plant nor animal, this autumn **Mary Green** takes us through the deep-rooted and ancient kingdom of fungi.

Autumn is the time we most associate with fungi, though they are around us all the time. They are a separate kingdom from plants and animals in the way our life is described by scientists.

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This was not always so: until the middle of last century they were considered a sub-set of plants, and many people still think of them this way ("Plant-based" foods often use fungi but technically shouldn't).

Now we know fungi are different from both animals and plants, there has been much more research on fungi and new things are being discovered about them all the time.

In simple terms, fungi usually consist of a network of threads, often underground, which link up with other organisms, especially plants.

They absorb and release nutrients from the soil around them and exchange these with the plants they live with. Most plants have "mycorrhizal" fungi, in other words fungi which grow in harmony with their roots.

Fungi can also grow on and in other parts of plants, and on and in animals. Usually the relationship between fungus and plant or animal is mutually beneficial, but sometimes it is not and the fungus may be destructive. Indeed, some fungi specifically live on dead and dying tissue and help the recycling process of nature.

We are generally unaware of these networks of underground fungi. They can be huge and live for a very long time – in fact they are now recognised as the largest and oldest natural things in our world.

Fungi grow by putting out thread-like structures called hyphae that make up the bodies of the organisms ("mycelia") and they digest organic matter externally before absorbing it into their mycelia. They then release carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and phosphorus into the soils and atmosphere, which support other forms of life. The networks move forwards as they grow and die off at the back, so a fungal mass may seem never to die.

Plants need these fungi and depend on them for some of their food. Some plants can link in to many different fungi but some need very specific ones. Examples of the latter are orchids – very hard to transplant as they need their own fungi – and heather, which relies on specific fungi on heathland.

An old bracket fungus: Some fungi grow on the side of trees.

Fungi growing near a tree root.

The Lawyer's wig: A shaggy cap.

Fungi are a very broad group and include yeasts and moulds - things that help produce our foods or destroy them!

What we generally think of as fungi are the fruiting bodies that some mycelia throw up from time to time to use another kind of reproduction with spores. These are our familiar mushrooms and toadstools.

There are lots of different families of fungi and hundreds of species with fruiting bodies. Only relatively few have common English names but they must have been better known in previous centuries when they were more widely eaten.

Where there are common names they are often helpfully descriptive, like Alfred's Cakes (burnt looking) amethyst deceiver (a lovely bluish-purple) and stinkhorn (rude-looking!)

It may be useful to divide them according to where and with what they appear. One group come up in grassy pastures, including garden lawns. Another, perhaps the largest, grows round the roots of trees, often particular species of tree. Some grow on trees. Others grow on dead and dying wood.

The pasture growing ones include the field mushroom, the one we know and love as a food.

There is a bigger relative called the horse mushroom, also very edible. They often pop up after a warm wet night. These mushrooms have white caps and pinkish gills, turning darker as they age.

Unfortunately, there are other mushrooms in the same family that are very poisonous. One common poisonous one is the yellow-stainer mushroom, which as its name suggests turns yellow when cut. So even collecting field mushrooms is difficult. I can generally recognise them because I grew up with them. They are not so common these days because they grow in old pasture, not on "improved" grassland. Sometimes garden lawns have flowers of old pasture, and they may have the fungi too.

Another pasture group are the waxcaps. These are smaller than field mushrooms and often brightly coloured and as their name suggests look waxy. They shine in the sun and look very attractive. Some of them are edible but they aren't much eaten in this country.

Posionous Fly agaric.

We've really lost our culture of knowing and eating edible fungi, which is still much stronger on the continent. I remember going foraging with my French uncle and collecting and eating all sorts of mushrooms I wouldn't dare eat here.

Also on grassland are "fairy ring" mushrooms. They grow in coils and rings and often appear in people's lawns, reminding us of the fungi underneath all our gardens and houses.

There's another mushroom that's quite easy to identify because it comes at a completely different time of year. This is the St George's mushroom, which pops up in spring.

Puffballs are quite easy to identify too – they seem to have no stem, the ball shape growing directly on the ground. They can be very big and I've often found them round here. Many kinds are edible.

Most of our named fungi appear round trees, hedges and woodland. One that people recognise is the fly agaric, the red-and-white spotted one beloved of illustrators. It's poisonous though not usually fatal. It has psychoactive properties and can induce hallucinations and trance. It was used by some northern peoples for this as part of religious ceremonies. As with many fungi it can be eaten by some animals. It's believed to be one of the sources of belief in witches' abil-

You may have spotted clumps around the area: Fungi grows in a wooded area among leaf litter.

A Bolete fungi pulled from root.

A Hedgehog mushroom: So-called because of its 'spines'.

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ity to fly and even for flying reindeer! The term fly agaric comes from the fact that it was used as an insecticide in past times.

It grows especially among pine, fir and birch trees, so is more common in northern and western UK and across northern Europe and America. It's not common round here but I can usually find it in places like the Lickeys and the little wooded ridge going out from Barnt Green towards Blackwell.

Last year I saw a similar but even more poisonous spotted fungus called the panther cap. Often the names are a clue!

A good edible group of mushrooms are the boletes. There are more than fifty different kinds in Britain, and most, though not all, are edible. They're easy to tell apart from other mushrooms but not so easy to distinguish between the different boletes. Instead of gills like field mushrooms, boletes have a spongy underside.

The best one to find is the cep or penny-bun. As its English name suggests it is a lovely brown colour on top. It is edible and delicious. It's one of the mushrooms used extensively in prepared foods like mushroom soup, and is widely sold on the continent though not here.

The birch bolete is also common, growing as its name suggests by birch trees, and there is another big one called slippery jack, which has a shiny, slightly slimy brown top. Boletes all grow round tree roots, some deciduous and some round conifers, like the larch bolete.

Some of the other groups are even bigger than this. One group called russulas has more than 100 UK species. They have gills a bit like field mushrooms and are often bright colours, reddish or yellow. They grow round tree roots too. Unfortunately they range from edible to highly poisonous and you would need to know them very well before thinking of them as food.

There are three easily-identifiable fungi you might spot locally. First, the shaggy cap, also known as the lawyer's wig. It grows by roads and paths and in gardens and comes up like a column, splaying out to the familiar shaggy shape. It's edible when young but rather slimy when it gets to the shaggy stage!

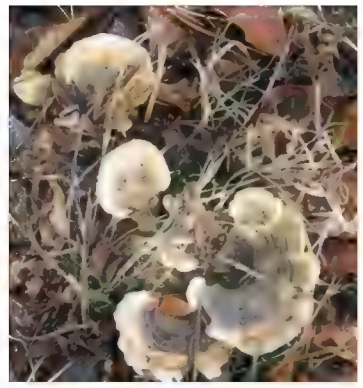
Second is the hedgehog mushroom. This has spines underneath instead of gills. I've seen it by the canal in Shortwood.

Third is the cauliflower fungus, which looks like a cauli, and I've seen by Newbourne wood. All are edible, but don't try them without help.

Fungi on trees are fascinating. Some grow widely, some on specific trees. The jelly-ear grows on elder and is very easy to spot. The birch polypore is big, white and solid. Some of these "bracket fungi" are edible, especially the bright yellow chicken-of-the-woods, which I have tried and enjoyed (with guidance!). There are hoof fungi, looking just like horses' hooves, and the dryad's saddle, a big fleshy bracket.

And on dead wood and tree stumps you'll find even more. Turkey-tail or many-zoned polypore is well-known, with coloured bands. Oyster-mushrooms are quite common too, and a lot of smaller fungi. There are some fungi that destroy trees, like honey fungus.

This has just been a quick look through our fascinating fungi. See what you can spot this autumn – but best to leave them alone!



Turkey tail fungi: Also known as a many zoned polypore.

Chicken of the woods: Supposedly named due to the texture of the flesh resembling cooked chicken.

Editor's Note: *While Mary knows her stuff on foraging and fungi,* The Village *does not advise readers to pick and eat fungi without the proper advice and training from a professional. As Mary points out; there are plenty of poisonous types that could be mistaken for an edible mushroom!*

■ I thought I'd look back at some of my older poems. This one (below) I wrote in autumn nearly 40 years ago, driving to work in Birmingham.

Getting to work

Waiting at the lights, the traffic
snarled
my eyes glazed I glare at the rear screen
of the car in front: on the radio
"this is the age of miracles and wonder"
in the screen a strange pattern
I look up
seven geese fly in quiet formation over the city
- and the day breaks loose –
I drive on singing, my tyres
kick up the falling leaves

The anonymous **birder** *How to enjoy village birdlife*

INVASION OF THE PARAKEETS

ROSE ringed parakeets, also known as ring necked parakeets, have been spotted on *The Village* patch.

Should we be alarmed? Are they the new grey squirrel, displacing our native species or a colourful addition to our local wildlife?

Well they are certainly not new, there are records of its presence in the UK in the 1800s and parrots have been kept as pets for centuries. However, it wasn't recorded as a breeding bird until the 1970s and was included in the official British bird list in 1983.

Like the bird itself there are some colourful myths about how the bird made the jump from the pet to wild breeding bird. . . One theory suggests they escaped from the set of the African Queen filmed in West London in 1951.

Another that Jimi Hendrix released a pair named Adam and Eve on Carnaby Street in 1968, possibly as a publicity stunt to promote his album *Electric Ladyland*, hopefully not distracting the crosstown traffic.

Outbreaks of "Parrot Fever", *Psittacosis*, a respiratory disease that can jump from birds to humans, were recorded in the 1930s and again in the 1950s resulting in the death of a Birmingham owner.

Imports of parrots were subsequently banned by the Ministry of Health for over two decades. Maybe worried owners released their pets as a result?

The most likely explanation for the initial jump from captivity is simply birds escaping due to multiple reasons from aviary damage to careless ownership. However they found freedom, there are approximately 12,000 breeding pairs in the UK and while their stronghold is in the South East, they have been recorded in all the home counties and are undoubtedly on the move into our region in greater numbers. This is probably due to the search for less competitive feeding and breeding locations as their numbers rise.

Regarding climate they may prefer warmer conditions hence the concentration in the South, however as they are native to Asia and sub-Saharan Africa they can happily tolerate cold even freezing temperatures, living in Himalayan regions too. Our mild weather is no problem for this most adaptable parrot.

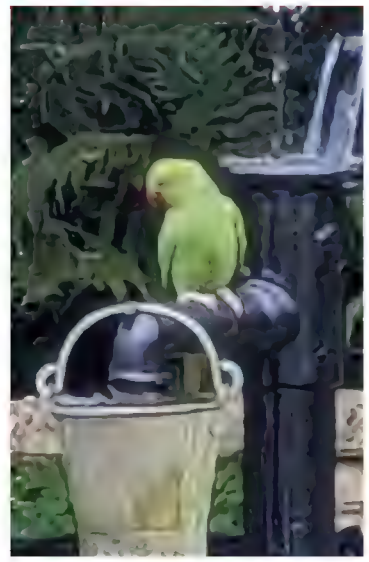
They breed early in the year, laying two to four eggs, incubating for three weeks before fledging at seven weeks.

The nesting site is in an existing tree cavity. So this may have an impact on other cavity nesters such as woodpeckers, owls and nuthatches.

As with most successful species, they aren't fussy about their food, eating a variety of seeds, fruit, flowers, buds and even bark. They are more than happy to visit bird tables where their assertive nature ensures a good share of the spoils.

Like Corvids, parakeets will roost in very large numbers, no doubt sharing feeding information and grouping for warmth and security.

I have seen many more parakeets in our area this year, usually announced with a piercing, possibly annoying screech, previously sightings being relatively rare. I am not aware of a communal roost yet but would be interested to hear if readers are (*If you know of any, let us know by email at editor@villageonline.co.uk*)



Spotted in Alvechurch: A parakeet rests on an ornamental pump.
Image/K & J Stirrup

The question with all non-native species is: are they an invasive species to be controlled or are they just part of the ever changing ecology to be accepted and enjoyed?

Will they displace our woodpeckers and nuthatches or will they provide lots of opportunity for sparrowhawks, peregrines, owls and other predators?

The official view seems to be that they aren't unduly affecting our ecology at the moment but if they start causing a problem to crops or other human activity they may well end up going the way of the Norwegian Blue.

I'm undecided, a bit of a "Marmite bird", but definitely appearing in a tree near you soon.

JL

Village Gardening

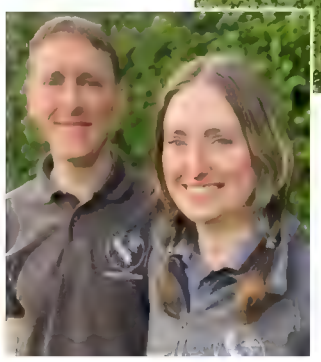
CUTTING BACK AND RESTING

Leighanne Gee from **Fern 'n' Furl** updates *The Village* on the highs and lows of a village gardener through the recent very wet weather, and gives her best top tips for the autumn and how to prepare your garden for cooler weather.

IT'S been a busy few months since my last feature in *The Village*, the biggest update is that my husband, Andy, has now joined *Fern N Furl* as a gardener.

Andy (pictured with Leighanne, below) has always had a keen interest in nature, spending long periods of his childhood outdoors; in his parents' garden, wading in the nearby brook and helping out at the urban farm that his family ran. His love of wildlife led to him studying Countryside Management at Moreton Morrell College, before a 13 year career at Winterbourne House and Garden in Birmingham.

His passion for plants, specifically carnivorous plants has outgrown our greenhouse . . . more on that another time.



Prepare your lawn: Left shows before edging, right shows after edging.

As a team of two, we've been able to increase our availability, allowing us to share our skills and experience with a wider audience – only the recent yellow weather warnings have held us back! It might be cooler, and the nights may be drawing in, the garden is not yet fully rested, there's still plenty for us all to do . . .

All lawns, no matter the shape or condition, look better when their edges are sharp. Straight line or curved, the solution is the same; run an edging tool (AKA a half-moon) along the edge to trim away any excess growth.

If there isn't a slab or brick edge to follow, consider using a wooden plank or string line as a guide to avoid veering off course. Hose pipes can be useful for redefining any curved lines that you may have, simply lay it out, check that you're happy with the way it looks and follow the line as you cut.

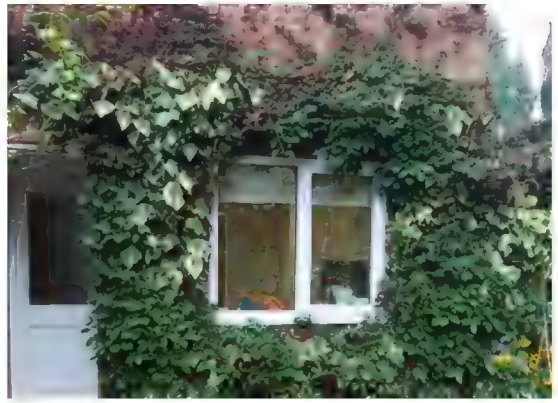
And while the leaves are falling, it's worth keeping an eye on the lawn. A light scattering won't do any harm but if you have areas that are covered throughout the winter, you risk being left with bare patches come spring. Ponds can be affected by leaf litter too – the nutrients that leach into the water during decomposition can encourage excessive algal growth. Use a net to remove as many leaves as possible, leave the debris near the pond edge for a day or two to allow any misplaced wildlife to return to the water.

After a colourful display, soon the branches of deciduous trees will be bare, and the focus will shift to the evergreen trees and shrubs, and the structure they provide in the winter garden. Whether you prefer the softer "au naturel" look or the crisp, freshly-cut finish, evergreens are an essential part of any garden.

Of course there are other forms of winter interest; the feathery seed heads of ornamental grasses create movement and airiness. The bold stems of dogwood (Cornus) will help brighten a dull spot, with cultivars in a variety of shades of green, yellow, orange and red – surely there's a dogwood for everyone?!

Even the herbaceous perennials can add a bit of drama; the spiky seedheads of Eryngium, Echinops and Acanthus fade to silvery grey and hold up well to the elements. Slender stems of Verbena bonariensis, frothy heads of Symphotrichum (formerly named Aster) or bold Hydrangea blooms can withstand the rain and wind, while still providing shape and form. So don't be so eager to cut everything back, you may even be able to make an indoor arrangement from your remaining seedheads.

Many herbaceous plants will wither away, coming back with vigour in spring. For now, they can be neatened up; cut back dead growth to the ground, leaving an inch of stem visible to identify the location of the plants. Congested clumps can be split to rejuvenate them, providing you with 'extra' plants for elsewhere. With maybe enough spares to plant swap with a friend? Don't attempt to divide herbaceous perennials once the ground freezes, if you missed the window, hold off until spring and try again.



Climbers: Need to be cut back into shape.

Mulching with compost or leaf mould can help prevent weed growth and also nourish the soil. It's a good idea to spread a couple of inches over bare soil – while the ground is still accessible, this will be trickier to do in spring without trampling the new growth.

Check that any wall climbers are clear of the windows and gutters, trimming back any wayward growth that's not needed to fill gaps on the plant support/trellis. With the recent heavy rain, you may have raised your pots up off the ground already. If not, put some pot feet or bricks underneath them to prevent waterlogging and root rot over the winter.

Remember to bring your tender plants in before we get frosty conditions. Pelargoniums, dahlias, citrus and cacti that have spent the summer outdoors need some shelter to make it through the winter. Where possible, keep them away from direct heat and draughts, and water sparingly. Wrap tree ferns, bananas and similar larger plants with horticultural fleece if it's not feasible to bring them under glass/indoors.

When all of that is done, take a well earned rest and enjoy a hot cup of tea. Look out for the little gems as you go about your day; tiny pink Cyclamen, purple Callicarpa berries, grass seedheads, violas and autumn flowering Camellias.

For more information about Fern 'n' Furl, see page 9. Or get in touch with Leighanne for a free garden visit at lanny@fernnfurl.com or you can call 07749 509934.

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EVENTS

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA continues the 2024/25 season at 7.30pm on 7th December in the Ark St Laurence Church Alvechurch. "A winter journey" a selection of music depicting the magic and wonder of the season including "Christmas Concerto" by Guiseppi Torelli and music from The Nutcracker, Polar Express and The Snowman. On 14th December at 3pm at St George's C of E Church Worcester a Christmas family concert, a fun-filled seasonal afternoon of music for all the family including the story of The Nutcracker set to music by Tchaikovsky. Tickets and info www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA conducted by Lee Armstrong, will give their Autumn Concert on Sunday evening, 24th November 2024, at 7pm, in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR. Their interesting programme is:- Wagner Overture 'The Mastersingers'; Debussy 'Suite de Danse' arranged by Lee Armstrong; and Symphony No.1 Kalinnikov. Admission is free, and donations to the retiring collection are much appreciated. You are invited to come along to support the orchestra and bring friends. Save the Date of their Spring Concert, which will be on 13th April 2025 in the same venue.

A CHRISTMAS FAIR will be held on Saturday 7th December between 11am-2pm in Holy Trinity Church, Rose Hill, Lickey B45 8RR. £1admission to raise funds for the Christmas Shelter and church . For info contact ryder1872@gmail.com

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. New members are always welcome. For more information or to join or book us, see our website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They meet in the Village Hall on 4 and 18 November and have pub sessions on 11 and 25 November. They will be preparing to sing at Christmas!

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm. For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm. For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, rehearse at St. John's Church, Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. They are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email-

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

THE BENEFITS OF SINGING

ALMOST everyone can sing. Whether it's humming along to your favourite song, singing on your own in the shower, or part of an organised group, singing comes naturally to virtually everyone. But did you know that singing is really good for your health?

Over the last few years many academic research projects have been undertaken by universities and research establishments around the world. These reveal that choral singing can provide significant benefits including Improving physical health, improving mental health, improving social interaction and improving speaking ability.

Barnt Green Choral Society is dedicated to the promotion of choral singing for the benefit of the local community. They run an adult mixed-voice choir, comprising all backgrounds and abilities, led by professional musicians. They perform three concerts every year which includes a wide variety of popular modern songs, Christmas songs and carols, and choral classics. The emphasis is on singing to the best of your ability while having a great deal of fun.

New faces are always welcome and you don't need to have experience of choral singing or be able to read music. They meet on Monday evenings (7.45pm – 9.45pm) September to June at the Parish Centre, Barnt Green, B45 8NR. To find out more, visit the group at one of their Monday sessions or email info@barntgreenchoralsociety.org

blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. They meet on Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs FREE weekly string orchestra, concert band and beginner group Lift Off! sessions for young musicians. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at The Orchards School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental lessons are also provided at the centre. For info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or r.g.henley@btinternet.com

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY meets in the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, on Mondays from 7.45 - 9.45pm. The choir sings a range of music throughout the year, performing at least three concerts. New singers are always welcome and there is no need to audition! For information, see barntgreenchoralsociety.org or facebook.com/barntgreenchoralsociety. The annual Family Christmas Concert will be held at 3pm on 14 December at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green B45 8NR. Favourite carols, popular Christmas songs, and readings followed by seasonal refreshments in the Parish Centre. Tickets £10 (under 16s free) from choir members or at the door.

DANCING

JAZZ HEELS CLASS FOR ADULTS. A new class held on Tuesdays 5:45-6:30pm at Hopwood Village Hall. For more info contact Amy on 07979408997.

continues overleaf

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/ Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements.

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group!
Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997
amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk
www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, Thursdays 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechurch Inn, B48 7LD. Doors open at 6pm. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Come on your own or with friends. Contact 07779686679.

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case of date change), 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

DANCING POINTE offering RAD ballet classes age 3-18. Based at St Andrews first school, Barnt Green. Contact daningpointe@outlook.com.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green. The upcoming films will be on 19th October 7pm: Angel & the Bad Man: Injured gun-fighter nursed back to health by Quaker nurse. And on Sunday 20 October 2.30pm: Highly acclaimed film, based on Martin Amis's novel, focusing on the life of Rudolf Höss and his family, who live next to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. Info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact paul_and_carrol@live.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time. Their talk on Nov 13th at 7:30pm will be "The history of Halloween" by Paul Harding. The AVS Christmas Party: A Caribbean Christmas with Cocktails and Mocktails will be held on Saturday 14 December at 7pm - this is a ticket only event, details will be released soon.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £3 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Amanda Dauncey on 0121 445 5966.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch meet on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A for people no longer in full time work. Many activities and events - learning for fun and meeting new friends. There's a speaker meeting each month too. Full details are on the website: bromsgrove.u3asite.uk. Learn, laugh, live.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers providing a range of support - from friendship and practical help - for all refugees and asylum seekers moving into the district. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious beliefs, and new volunteers are always needed. More info at brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group specifically offers respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/ cake provided – no charge. Contact Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, book in advance www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk.

RE-ENGAGE aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. For more info www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heartspeakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmastersheartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. A varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at Burcot Grange. Visitors £4 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. or email contact@wbdcs.org.uk. Non-members are welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB's next meet on the 13th November, when they are having a talk entitled "A Potted History of Porcelain" with David Bartley. He's a very interesting speaker and attendees sure to learn a lot! He is also giving the group the chance to bring a piece of porcelain for him to look at, tell them about and it's value if any! They will have their usual social get together afterwards with hot drinks and biscuits, plus the usual raffle prize for one lucky person! Come and join in and enjoy a happy afternoon and maybe even learn something interesting. They start at 1.30pm at Alvechurch Cricket Club as usual. See you there, visitors welcome ! More info from Janet on 447 7870 or Lis on 445 3895

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old ones (with a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am-12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £20. Non-members £4 per meeting. Please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk. Their next meeting will be "In Search of the Bromsgrove Guild in the West Midlands" by Quintin Watt on November 19th.

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker--, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/ friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB meets at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club, Birmingham Road, Alvechurch B48 7TA, every Wednesday at 7.15pm September - May. The club has teams playing in both Birmingham and Worcester leagues. New players are welcome - just turn up or contact Giles Stanton on 07932 053621 or David Smith on 07540 304620.

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com. The next walk will be "A Walk Around Alvechurch" on Sun Nov 3rd at 2pm led by Tony Brannon 07763 468893. Meet at Alvechurch Station steps B48 7SD. The following walk will be on Sunday 1 December, led by Gerard Nash (contact 0121 445 4454 for details) for "A walk around Spernal", meet at Haydon Way Wood car park B80 7EX.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Contact: barntgreenfishingclub@gmail.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). New members welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12

continues overleaf

miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailing-barntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. Contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue—classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established. Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 11.30–2.30pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Keith on 0121 445 5094.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus (reformer/ tower / barrels etc.) 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well. Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barnt-greensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk or call on 07828 515344 for info.

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Robert Hawkesford (Bob) on 07788856642 or email rhawkesford59@gmail.com

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information visit Cycling UK or email Sheila Evans on fairf8@yahoo.co.uk

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

6 WEEK MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS COURSES to help you relax, find inner peace, and elevate your life. Join them on Wednesday evenings at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green or online whenever it suits you. Suitable for everyone! Enrol in the upcoming courses and discover how they've been changing lives at www.MeditationWithCoz.com or contact Coz at 07770067349. Follow on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz.

BARNT GREEN CHUGGERS & CHAINGANG provide run & cycling sessions for mixed abilities, those wanting to stay in shape plus those wishing to improve their running, cycling & fitness all in a social & recreational environment. Club Sessions - Chuggers (run) Monday & Wednesday 7pm and Chaingang (cycling) Wednesday 7pm & Saturday 9am all from Barnt Green Sports Club. For more info or to arrange a trial session please contact kategallimore@googlemail.com

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES working on mobility, strength, flexibility and balance. Classes are very welcoming and inclusive and are held on: Wednesday's 1.30-2.30 at St Stephens Church Hall, Rednal and Thursdays 10am-11am Blackwell Community Hall, Blackwell. The cost is £5 per class. For information call Lorraine 07866877881

LEGS, BUMS AND TUMS every Thursday morning at The Parish Centre at 9.15am at £6 per class. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

KEEP FIT by Exercising to Music! Every Monday morning at 10am and Thursday morning at 10.15am at The Friends Meeting House. £6 per class pay as you go. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meets at The Village Hall on the second Thursday each month at 7.15pm. The meeting on the 14th November 2024 will be the Annual General Meeting followed by Cheese and Wine. All members are welcome on the evening re the election of the Committee. The Society is always looking for "new blood" to join the Committee so if you feel you would like to give it a try please speak to a Committee Member on the evening. For more information please telephone Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle. Further information on 07843758489 .

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request." For details of next meeting and more information contact marygreen5005@gmail.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group meeting in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. For information: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroftarts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members welcome. Don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.15am to 12.15pm and Tuesday afternoons from 12.30pm to 3pm during term time at the new Cofton Village Hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide Headquarters in Blackwell Road just beyond the Barnt Green Social Club. They run Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions with visiting tutors at 2 - 3 week intervals. Interested artists of all abilities are welcome. Please phone Jackie on 0121 445 4745 for details.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is a course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

FORGE MILL CREATIVE TEXTILE GROUP are a friendly group of enthusiastic local stitchers, both experienced and beginners. They meet on Friday mornings at Beoley Village Hall. They are a leisure learning and development group exploring various techniques and media to create textiles artwork. Please contact Lynda on 0121 445 3212 or Janet on 0121 445 4335 for more information.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Fridays in Barnt Green (other days/venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and carers) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, or contact 0121 445 1425 clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and network, feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make life-long friends in your community. Held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesdays. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or Facebook @ New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

STAY & PLAY for under 5s and their carers running each Thursday from 9:30-11:30am during term time at Barnt Green Baptist Church, Bittel Road. Just pop along for play, singing & story time. Email familypastoral@bgb.org.uk

Blackwell Stay & Play meets on Mondays during term time at Blackwell Community Hall. Under 5s and their carers are welcome from 9.30am – 11am

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.org or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7pm on the second Tuesday every month between April and November, and at 12pm December to March, at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information

continues overleaf

from Helen Spence (01527 822622)or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For information: Sheila Nunnerley 07465 439646.

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more information contact Marian Clemons on 07586354826 or follow them on Facebook: Hillside WI at Alvechurch

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire. Call 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please call 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

ROWNEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL has a large hall, with stage and sprung floor (ideal for dance and exercise) and two smaller rooms. Available for one off or regular hire, ample parking. Email: admin@rowneygreenvillagehall.org

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY HALL is available for groups, functions and parties. The large hall is complemented by a new kitchen and a grassed area. Details at blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL has a wide range of facilities, including a modern kitchen, bar, PA system, projector and screen, skittles alley and a large car park with disabled access to the hall. To book your event, meeting, party or celebration for up to 100 people, please contact Richard on 01527 66646.

THE BOATHOUSE VENUE is set in the unique location of Upper Bittell and is available to hire for Weddings, Private Parties, Wakes, Meetings, Workshops and Group Gatherings. It offers a fully equipped kitchen and licensed bar. For enquiries, email boathouse.bgw@gmail.com.

OUR LADY'S PARISH CENTRE in Rednal is available for hire for clubs, groups, classes, private parties etc Large hall with kitchen and car park. Enquiries to olhallbooking@gmail.com or 0121 453 3452.

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The Nutcracker (selection) *(Tchaikovsky)*

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www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

If you would like to feature your group or event in *The Village* What's On section, the deadline for the November issue is 15 November 2024. info@villageonline.co.uk

20 From The Village archive Years Ago

OUR NOVEMBER 2004 cover showed the Alvechurch Morris men mid-dance during Alvechurch Alight. Inside were many more pictures from the weekend, including the lantern procession (below), activities at the cricket club, and the Battle of the Bands.

IN THE NEWS: *Plus ça change* . . . There was concern in Alvechurch about large lorries delivering to the Co-op several times a day (as shown in this photo sent in by a reader), blocking parking spaces as well as causing a danger to other road-users and pedestrians.

However, it wasn't all bad – one reader had written in to sing the praises of Alvechurch's public loo!

ALVECHURCH LIONS, which had only begun a year earlier as an under-9s team, had grown to such an extent that the club now boasted eight teams and almost 100 players aged from under-7s to under-14s, all from the *Village* area.

10 From The Village archive Years Ago

OUR NOVEMBER 2014 cover featured an atmospheric image of Cofton Park, taken and sent in by one of our readers, LaDonna Sears-Thomas. It was one of the first pictures taken on a mobile phone to be used on the cover of the magazine.

ALVECHURCH Parish Council was in a spin over plans to build an upmarket retirement complex on Green Belt land close to the centre of the village.

After first giving the McCarthy & Stone plan support "in principle", the council had decided to revisit the issue, noting that it had recently objected to 22 homes on Green Belt land at Hopwood. Coun Adrian Smith pointed out: "You can't support the Green Belt against one application and not for another."

ROCK MUSIC mogul Tim Parsons, of Hopwood, gave us a fascinating insight into the world of big stars and big egos as he prepared for an exhibition of memorabilia from his 25 years in the business, including playing a large part in the organisation of the Live Aid concerts in 1985.

A TEAM from Kings Norton Golf Club, Alvechurch, featuring players from across *The Village* area, celebrated winning the prestigious West Midlands League trophy after 47 years of trying.

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